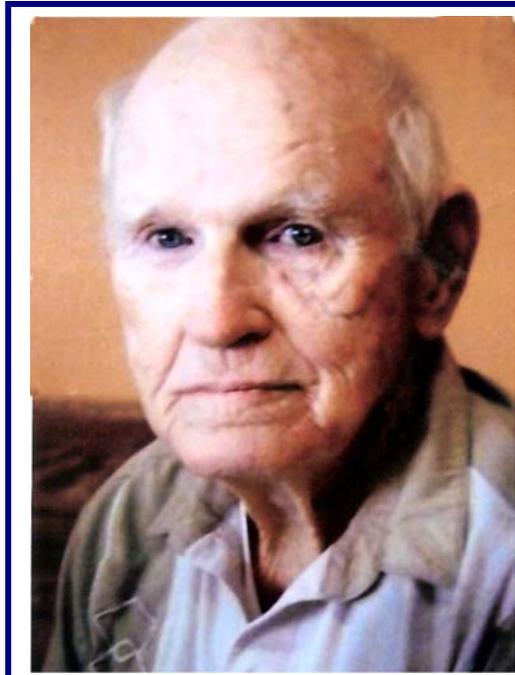


Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution
Proudly “Spotlights” our September 2011
Patriot of the Month



Adolphus “Ross” Wright Jr.

Sponsored by:

**Marshall Chapter
Marshall, Missouri**

Adolphus “Ross” Wright Jr. was born in Blackburn, Missouri on July 14, 1925. He experienced friction at home so Ross displayed his independence at age twelve by leaving home. Ross drifted around the country. He drove a produce truck across Missouri to St. Louis while the “legal” driver was incapacitated. By his sixteenth birthday, he had been to every state west of the Mississippi River except Louisiana.

Nearing his eighteenth birthday Ross enlisted in the U.S. Army on July 12, 1943. He went to basic training near Lincoln, Nebraska, and then he was transferred to Las Vegas, Nevada for Army Air Corps Training. From Las Vegas, Nevada, he was assigned to Air Corps Gunnery School where he trained on B-17 bombers. He was assigned to an eleven man aircrew of a B-24 Liberator bomber as a waist gunner. His unit went to Topeka, Kansas, where they picked up their B-24 aircraft as they were being assigned to the

464th Heavy Bombardment Group in Italy. They flew the aircraft from Topeka, Kansas, to Florida, to Brazil, across the ocean to Africa, and then to Foggia, Italy, forty-five miles south of Rome.

When Ross requested a transfer to a different aircrew there were no openings so Ross became the "Squadron Gunner," which meant he filled in any aircrew that was short a gunner. He flew long-range missions to attack railroad marshalling yards in Vienna, Austria, oil refineries in Rumania, and a shipyard in Versailles, France. Ross' tenth and final mission was to bomb the railroad marshalling yards in Vienna, Austria on June 26, 1944. The B-24 took a direct hit from anti aircraft fire over Austria. The shell hit the bottom of the aircraft and exited the top. No personnel were injured and there was no serious damage to the bomber, except the B-24 lost the ability to gain altitude. This made it impossible to fly over the Swiss Alps so the crew parachuted into enemy territory over Austria. Ross made a perfect jump and landing. German civilians who were unaware of Ross' nationality met him. They assumed Ross was a German pilot, as they could not understand his dialect of German. The Germans took him to a farm and fed him a hot meal and then escorted him to the town's city hall/police station. Still armed, Ross walked over to a world map and pointed to Kansas City and then pointed to himself and said "Americana". He then took off his gun belt with holstered pistol and placed it on a nearby desk. At this time all aircrew pre-mission briefings dictated to not forcibly resist capture, as the war's inevitable end was not far away.

Ross was taken to the local railway station where he joined his captured B-24 aircrew. Thankfully none of the aircrew was seriously injured. Ross and his fellow prisoners were transported to Luftwaffe base at Graz, Austria. They continued on their long train journey via Frankfurt and Berlin to Stalag Luft IV. Stalag Luft IV was a German POW camp for enlisted Allied POWs located in northeastern Prussia, now Poland. Each room had eight double bunks, with sixteen Prisoners of War assigned to one room. Ross arrived there one week before his nineteenth birthday. His parents had received notification that he was Missing in Action and then a second notification that he was a Prisoner of War.

On February 6, 1945, the POWs were relocated due to the approaching Russian Army. They were split into groups of three hundred men. Each man was issued two Red Cross parcels of food, each box about the size of a shoebox weighing ten pounds. They marched in a southwest direction all day and slept on the ground at night. The 1944-45 winter would be the coldest on record. As rations ran out the POWs had to forage for themselves. On March 15th Allied artillery fire could be heard, but the march would continue on for another forty-seven days. On May 2, 1945, British troops arrived and the Prisoners of War were liberated and trans-

ported to the Allied lines. Due to the severe lack of food for the entire march, most of the Prisoners of War were half of their normal body weight. Most of the men weighed about eighty-five pounds at the end of the eighty-four day march. Ross had survived the eight hundred eighty six mile death march.

After examination and processing, Ross and another Missourian went to Paris on a two day pass to "paint the town". After returning from Paris, Ross visited Brussels. There he learned Germany had surrendered and the European war was over. Ross and fellow Prisoners of War were then loaded onto a troop transport headed to Boston, Massachusetts. In Boston, they were transferred to a special train that was waiting for them. This train was commissioned to return the former Prisoners of War to their hometowns as fast as possible. Ross departed in St. Louis, Missouri, and proceeded to Marshall, Missouri. He was home for ninety days before being sent to West Palm Beach, Florida. There he was offered a discharge or to reenlist in the Air Corps. Ross remained in the Air Corps and witnessed its evolution into the U.S. Air Force. He remained in the Air Force for seventeen years, with thirteen years in Biloxi, Mississippi. He was also deployed to Texas and Japan over his Air Force career. He retired January 27, 1960 from the Air Force.

Ross has approximately sixty medals and citations. Those he still has include:

- Purple Heart w/2 clusters
- Air Medal w/1 cluster
- Prisoner of War Medal
- Good Conduct w/5 clusters
- Presidential Citation
- Several Unit Citations

After retiring from the Air Force, Ross went to work in an auto body shop in Kansas City, Missouri. Ross was married to Una Campbell and they had one daughter. He has five grandchildren and twenty great-grandchildren. Ross is now married to Ruth Stuart. He has nine stepchildren, eighteen step-grandchildren, and twenty-five step-great grandchildren. He is a member of the Plato Baptist Church.